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"I Am a Muslim Not an Extremist": How the Prevent Strategy Has Constructed a "Suspect" Community

IMRAN AWAN
University of Glamorgan

The aim of this article is to examine the new Prevent Strategy 2011 in the United Kingdom and critically analyze its impact upon British Muslim communities. The U.K. government's controversial Prevent Strategy 2011 has come under fierce opposition, with critics arguing that it will not actually prevent extremism but risks labeling the Muslim community as a "suspect" community. Following the British government review of counterterrorism policies and strategies in 2010, the article examines the key question: Will the new Prevent policy actually work? Recent studies show that previous Prevent policies have risked alienating the Muslim community (Kundnani). Indeed, the new Prevent Strategy 2011 also has the risk of the depoliticization of Muslim communities from wider civic society and risks creating a mosaic for extremist ideologies. The article argues that, in practice, Prevent is not particularly efficacious, and that the new strategy risks further marginalizing and stigmatizing Muslim communities.

Keywords: Counterterrorism, Extremism, State Multiculturalism, Multiculturalism in the UK, Failure of Multiculturalism, Community Policing, Radicalization, Muslim Communities, Prevent Strategy 2011.

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El objetivo de este artículo es examinar la nueva Estrategia de Prevención 2011 (Prevent Strategy 2011) en el Reino Unido y analizar críticamente su impacto en las comunidades musulmanas británicas. La controversial Estrategia de Prevención 2011 del gobierno del Reino Unido ha sido objeto de una fuerte oposición, con críticos afirmando que no prevendrá el extremismo y se arriesgará el encasillar a la comunidad musulmana como una comunidad "sospechosa." Luego de la modificación del gobierno británico de sus políticas y estrategias contra el terrorismo del 2010, este artículo examina la pregunta clave: ¿funcionará la nueva política de prevención? Estudios recientes muestran que políticas de prevención anteriores han corrido el riesgo de alienar a la comunidad musulmana (Kundnani). En efecto, la nueva Estrategia de Prevención 2011 también corre el riego de despolitizar a la comunidad musulmana de la sociedad civil y se arriesga a crear un mosaico de ideologías extremistas. Este artículo sostiene que en la práctica, Prevención 2011 no es particularmente eficaz y que la nueva estrategia expone a una mayor marginalización y estigmatización de las comunidades musulmanas.

In 2006, three British Muslim men were charged for planning to detonate liquid explosives on airliners to the United States (BBC News 2009) in what became known as the airline liquid bomb plot. In 2010, the Stockholm bomber, Taimour Abdulwahab al-Abdaly—an Iraqi-born Swede—and Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab—a U.S.-born citizen (BBC News 2010)—both planned to detonate explosives capable of causing mass carnage. A number of terrorist plots and attacks such as these, both in the United Kingdom and outside of Britain, led European leaders, including former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and British Prime Minister David Cameron, to hold an international conference in Munich in 2011 to discuss issues of global security, homegrown extremism, radicalization, and multiculturalism. The conference sparked a significant international debate concerning how countries adopt counterterrorism policies that are used to combat the extremist threat (Cameron 2011).[1]

[1] This video clip on the BBC News website shows part of the speech by the British Prime Minister David Cameron in Munich (BBC News 2011a).

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In Britain, this debate has also led to questions concerning the doctrine of "state multiculturalism," and the U.K. government's view that Britain should adopt a more "active muscular liberalism" to tackle and identify the root causes of extremist ideologies. Multiculturalism can be defined as a set of cultural beliefs and attitudes that lead to diversity and the promotion of community integration within the society. However, according to Lord Parekh (2000), chair of the report entitled "The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain," multiculturalism can also act as a double-edged sword: on one hand the state may use the term to promote diversity, yet on the other hand it aims also to test its citizen's aptitude and knowledge of history, culture, and values of the respective country where they reside. Parekh stated that "[m]ulticulturalism is sometimes taken to mean that different cultural communities should live their own ways of life in a self-contained manner" (BBC News 2004). Statistics from the U.K. Citizenship Survey (April 2010-September 2010) seems to reinforce this perception that multiculturalism in the United Kingdom may not be working (Communities and Local Government 2010). The survey revealed that people from ethnic minority backgrounds felt a sense of inequality and a perception that the British criminal justice system has discriminated against them, thereby questioning the whole fabric of multiculturalism in the United Kingdom.

Similarly, Githens-Mazer (2011) argues that this transnational approach to tackling extremism misses a crucial element which, for him, should be based upon credible evidence that extremism in the United Kingdom is a real threat as opposed to merely government rhetoric and sound bites kindling fear and risk, causing confusion, disengagement, and confrontation in diverse communities. He argues that the British prime minister's speech and tone in Munich have little impact when it comes to the U.K.'s capacity to monitor extremists and terrorists.

> Cameron's speech has definitively laid out an approach to terrorism based on emotion rather than evidence. In Cameron's world, concerns about assimilated identity are of greater ordinal importance than counter-terrorism strategies that directly contribute to stopping people being blown up on buses. (Githens-Mazer 2011)

The U.K. government's counterterrorism policy is enshrined in its CONTEST 1, CONTEST 2, and CONTEST 3 strategies (HM Government 2006, 2011a). The focus of CONTEST is to reduce the risk of international terrorism to the United Kingdom, and has four important strands. They include the Prevent Strategy 2011, the main aim and goal of which is to stop and prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The new Prevent Strategy 2011 now focuses on a "top-down" approach to tackling terrorist and extremist threats (Spalek 2011). The Prevent Strategy 2011 notes that

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> [p]reventing people becoming terrorists will require a challenge to extremist ideas where they are used to legitimise terrorism and are shared by terrorist groups. It will also require intervention to stop people beginning to move away from extremist but legal groups into proscribed illegal terrorist organisations. (HM Government 2011b, 24)

The other elements of CONTEST include the Pursue strand, which aims to stop terrorist attacks; Protect, which strengthens security systems against a possible terrorist attack; and Preparing for a terrorist attack. The Prevent Strategy 2011 has three main objectives: first, to tackle the ideological causes and challenges of terrorism (including threats from extremist groups and individuals); second, to prevent people from being drawn into terrorist-related activities by ensuring advice and support measures are provided to people who are deemed at risk of extremism; and finally, to promote partnerships between institutions working together to tackle the causes of extremism (HM Government 2011b).

This article aims to provide a background and framework to better understand the political adoption and practical functioning of the Prevent Strategy 2011 in the United Kingdom. It examines how the Prevent Strategy 2011 is currently being used by police forces, schools, and British universities, while also looking at the overall effectiveness and impact upon British Muslim communities. This research also assesses the argument, advanced by several critics, that the strategy could risk labeling the Muslim community as a "suspect" community (Githens-Mazer 2011; Hickman *et al*. 2011). The article concludes that the contemporary nature and threat of extremism provides a need for a more robust community-led approach to tackling the extremist threat that does not demonize and discriminate against a single community because of their faith, race, culture, or ethnicity.

International Approaches

Currently, the nature of the homegrown threat from extremism in the United Kingdom has led to a legal, political (see UK Parliament 2011), and theological debate concerning how Britain monitors and challenges extremist organizations and individuals (Brittain 2009). The broader research literature suggests that strategies such as Prevent have had a negative impact upon Muslim relationships with the police, and appear to have undermined trust between the police and Muslim community, thereby failing in one of Prevent's core objectives and aims concerning partnership work (Alam 2011; Allen 2011; Brown 2011; Gregory 2010; Jackson 2011; Jarvis and Lister 2011; Klausen 2009; McGhee 2011; Spalek 2011). For example, the former U.K. government reviewer for counterterrorism policy, Lord Carlile, has argued that the Prevent policy is crucial in building relationships and partnerships with hard-to-reach communities and law enforcement agencies such as the police, because, in his

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view, Britain is increasingly becoming a safe haven for terrorist and extremist groups. "The effect is to make the UK a safe haven for some individuals whose determination is to damage the UK and its citizens, hardly a satisfactory situation" (Carlile of Berriew 2011a, 31).

Dealing with the nature of homegrown extremism has inevitably led a number of European countries to adopt counter-extremism policies that aim to tackle the threat from extremism through the promotion of engagement and integration programs within communities. For example, in 2005, the European Union created a European-led counterterrorism strategy that focused on four key strands of counterterrorism policies, namely Prevent, Protect, Pursue, and Respond. The European Union has also been working toward a more holistic approach with its member states by creating a broader strategy that tackles radicalization and extremism. For example, the "workstreams" initiative, which is run in conjunction with countries such as Spain, helps integrate and work more closely with Muslim imams through educational training programs that improve imams' language skills and provide them with the adequate training in spotting the signs of extremism (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010). Archick and others' (2011, 1) comprehensive article examined the impact of such training programs across Europe. They found a strong correlation between these initiatives and how Islamist forms of extremism have been tackled within Muslim communities. Archick and others (2011, 2) state that "[m]embers of Congress have welcomed European initiatives to promote better integration of Muslims and curtail Islamist extremism in the hope that such efforts will ultimately help prevent future terrorist incidents."

Following a global downturn in the world's economies and a time of austerity, the British government has developed its vision for a "Big Society"—a concept that encourages communities in the United Kingdom to work together and make a positive contribution to British society. The "Big Society" initiative also contains subliminal messages of tackling extremism, and similar to its European allies, the United Kingdom has adopted these "softer" forms of community engagement via U.K. citizenship tests that promote community cohesion and use wider language courses that aim to work with Muslim imams. These initiatives are used to help imams identify triggers that could lead to extremism both within British mosques and also over the Internet. While a number of countries—including the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain—have been working together in multifaceted programs that aim to eradicate the extremist threat, the 2010 WikiLeaks cables have, by contrast, revealed the problematic nature of cross-border partnership work. Here, confidential documents showed how U.S. diplomats appeared to be critical of U.K. policy on preventing extremism within local Muslim communities. In a leaked cable, the U.S. diplomats suggested that, "[s]ince 7/7, HMG has invested considerable time and resources in engaging the British Muslim community. The current tensions demonstrate just how little progress has been made" (The Guardian 2010).

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The U.S. policy on tackling extremism is incorporated in its 2011 *Empowering Local Partners* publication (White House 2011), which attempts to understand and rationalize how people become extremists, and also tries to tackle the wider causes of extremism. Stating that "[l]aw enforcement plays an essential role in keeping us safe, but so too does engagement and partnership with communities" (White House 2011, 2), the clear focus of the U.S. strategy on defeating violent extremism is based on direct engagement with local communities that are encouraged to work closely with both intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

The present article concentrates on U.K. government policy (the Prevent Strategy 2011), offering a contribution to the field of community engagement and counterterrorism studies by providing critical context and structure that can help inform a better understanding of how current U.K. government policy is shaped, and the methods that the U.K. government are using to tackle extremism. In doing so, this article concomitantly offers an early reading of the impact of the new Prevent Strategy 2011 upon British Muslims and the risk associated with regard to the "construction" of the Muslim community as a "suspect" community. This concept of "construction" is an evolving metaphor that has been used to formulate the role of communities and counterterrorism policies, which have progressed from the Irish communities, who had been viewed as "suspects" in the past, to the present debate that Muslim communities are the "new suspects" (Awan 2012a).

Overview: Background and Context

The July 7th bombings in London in 2005 led the U.K. government to scrutinization from within Britain to improve security and resilience in the face of the "new" terrorist threat. This led to the enactment of controversial counterterrorism legislation, and according to Fenwick and Choudhury (2011, vi), since the introduction of counterterrorism legislation from 2001, statistics reveal that Britain has seen over 237 people arrested for a terrorist offense. Intervention programs that aim to counter the extremist threat (such as the Prevent Strategy) have seen 228 people referred to various interventionist initiatives and projects because they are deemed to be a risk to British national security.

Fenwick and Choudhury's (2011) article also revealed that British Muslims, and young British men in particular, feel a sense of alienation and resentment toward Prevent programs and counterterrorism legislation. They found, for example, that counterterrorism legislation, such as precharge detention, control orders, the glorification offense, and stop-and-search powers under the Terrorism Act of 2000 and Terrorism Act of 2006, were far too broad and had been used disproportionately against Muslim communities. This underwrites

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their assertion that "[c]ounter-terrorism measures are contributing to a wider sense among Muslims that they are being treated as a 'suspect community' and targeted by authorities simply because of their religion" (Fenwick and Choudhury 2011, 11).

Similarly, Hickman and others' (2011) article into the impact of counterterrorism policies upon Irish and Muslim communities in Britain found that the U.K. government needed to be more selective and use caution when enacting counterterrorism legislation. Such policies risked being used against minority communities that could be viewed as "suspects" since it was deemed that such policies were marginalizing them. Despite the issue of counterterrorism legislation being a problematic area, further concerns were also raised by both Muslim and non-Muslim participants in Fenwick and Choudhury's (2011) article, which appeared to show that Prevent funding had been allocated to unelected Muslim community leaders who were not representative of that particular community. Given that the U.K. government had intended to use these community leaders as gatekeepers for local Prevent projects, this has provoked confusion concerning the overall aims and objectives of the Prevent Strategy, and undermined the U.K. government's central focus of community cohesion and partnership.

Indeed, Fenwick and Choudhury (2011, 15) argue that "[i]n some areas, Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) was thought to be undermined by the lack of transparency around allocation of funding to groups." In March 2010, the House of Commons Select Committee for Communities and Local Government report into the Prevent policy reinforced these concerns. The report argued that Prevent had risked being labeled too weak because its core focus of community cohesion and partnerships had been blurred by the many Prevent programs that did not directly influence policy decisions on tackling extremism. The authors of the House of Commons report argued this point. They add that "[m]uch Prevent money has been wasted on unfocused or irrelevant projects, as a result either of misunderstanding of Prevent or of a lack of willingness and capacity of local organisations to deliver" (House of Commons 2010, 61; see also BBC News 2011b).

The perception of victimization of Muslim communities does appear to be a real concern, and the Prevent Strategy 2011 notes this as problematic. The following extract of the Prevent Strategy reveals the government's current viewpoint.

> It is realistic to accept that some problems have arisen, notably from the feeling of some parts of the community that they have been victims of state "snooping." Also, there has been some controversy about the extent to which the public sector should engage with possible extremists, albeit with the purpose of achieving the greater public good. (HM Government 2011b, 3)

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The next section provides a more in-depth analysis of the key issues within the Prevent Strategy 2011 by first examining the concept of the "old" and "new" terrorism debate in light of the Prevent Strategy 2011.

"Old" and "New" Terrorism

"Old" terrorism emerged as a result of Irish Republican organizations, such as the Irish Republican Army, which operated in Northern Ireland and Britain prior to the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998 and which have now embraced political initiatives to achieve their goals and aims. The differences between "old" and "new" terrorism are subtle but have evolved as a result of counterterrorism policies and political stances that led different communities to be viewed as a threat to British national security. This spurred a number of questions concerning what "old" and "new" forms of terrorism actually are. Have the methods, strategies, and rationales developed to deal with terrorism and extremism really changed that much? And are there historical continuities that might be excavated? The current Prevent Strategy 2011 seems to imply that the "new" terrorism will focus on Islamist extremism as opposed to the "old" terrorism that focused upon Irish dissident groups, the previous main threat of extremism.

Pantazis and Pemberton's (2009) argument that recent U.K. counterterrorism legislation has also led to the construction of the "new" "suspect" community as the Muslim community is compelling on a number of levels. Among other things, the present analysis reinforces and adds additional detail to Pantazis and Pemberton's (2009) findings by demonstrating that the new Prevent Strategy 2011 continues to reinforce the label of the "new" "suspect" community being the Muslim community.

Indeed, a central problem with the Prevent Strategy 2011 is that, although the Muslim community is not a homogenous group, police and state measures to prevent extremism have created an element of racial profiling of certain sections and factions within the Muslim community. A pertinent example concerns the treatment of the Salafist movement, whose close ideological alliance with the "Wahhabism" school of thought has been viewed in a negative light (Pantazis and Pemberton 2009). Wahhabism can be defined as a school of thought that attempts to tackle any innovations and practices that go against the core Islamic teachings (Blanchard 2008). Indeed, in 2007, a Channel 4 "Dispatches" program (aired in the United Kingdom on Monday, January 15, 2007) entitled "Undercover Mosque" attempted to show how extremism and "Wahhabism" were linked together within British mosques. A year later, a follow-up "Dispatches" documentary entitled "Undercover Mosque: The Return" (aired on Monday, September 1, 2008) revealed similar findings in its secret filming of Muslim preachers promoting an agenda of violence, hate, and extremism within British mosques (Dispatches 2008).

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One source of this problem lies in the wording of contemporary counterterrorism legislation and the definition of the word terrorism within it (see Pantazis and Pemberton 2009, 652). For example, under the Terrorism Act of 2000, the definition of the word terrorism includes "the use or threat of action where (a) the action falls within subsection (2), (b) the use or threat is designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and (c) the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause." Using Hillyard's (1993) notion of the "terror of prevention," Pantazis and Pemberton (2009, 652) contend that "the open-ended nature of the definition . . . [provides] considerable scope for the state to identify a wide array of groups as terrorist." According to these authors, this and other elements of counterterrorism legislation have given the U.K. police excessively wide powers (e.g., stop and search), which risk being abused by some police officers.

Martha Crenshaw (2007) also makes a compelling case in arguing that "new" and "old" terrorism are distinguished by different goals and aims. For her, "new" forms of terrorism are mainly conducted by extremist groups or individuals who have certain goals and aims that are wide, unlimited, and nonnegotiable. She argues that at the core of "new" terrorism, there are a group of people who have no respect for human life and dignity, adding that "[t]he new terrorists are fanatics unconstrained by any respect for human life. Violence is at the heart of their beliefs" (Crenshaw 2007, 10). "Old" terrorism is based on more pragmatic solutions that make compromise and negotiation more likely. "The aims of 'old' terrorists were understandable and tangible, typically related to issues of nationalism and territorial autonomy. Deals could be struck. The state could bargain with the 'old' terrorists. Conflicts could be resolved" (Crenshaw 2007, 11). The article will now examine in more detail the debate concerning the "new suspect" community.

The "Suspect" Community

The notion of "suspect" communities was first coined by Hillyard (1993) in his critique of how communities in Northern Ireland had fallen under this label. His analysis has a number of similarities in the context of how Muslim communities today could be viewed in a similar light. For example, profiling, hard-line policing, stop and search, surveillance, and detention have become policy-led strategies that attempt to deal with terrorism. Whether inadvertently or not, they have the potential to stigmatize the entire populations, such as Irish people living in Britain during the conflict in Northern Ireland, and now the Muslim community in Britain.

Pantazis and Pemberton (2009, 649) define a "suspect" community as

> a sub-group of the population that is singled out for state attention as being "problematic." Specifically in terms of policing, individuals may be

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> targeted, not necessarily as a result of suspected wrong doing, but simply because of their presumed membership to that sub-group. Race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, accent, dress, political ideology or any combination of these factors may serve to delineate the sub-group.

Using this definition, they propose a pyramid structure that starts at the base with how media reporting of stories pertaining to Muslim communities may unfairly label them as "Islamists," "fundamentalists," and "Jihadists," thus beginning the process of creating the "suspect" community. At the top of the pyramid, counterterrorism legislation and hard-line policing, such as house arrest, stop and search, law enforcement monitoring, and pre-charge detention, generate a more hostile arena led by law enforcement agencies and the state, which cements the categorization of Muslim communities as "suspects." At the pyramid's pinnacle, "applying to only a handful of individuals . . . the legal evidence may be stronger but a criminal trial has been considered impossible due to the sensitive nature of the evidence" (Pantazis and Pemberton 2009, 649).

However, Stephen Greer (2010, 1172) opposes Pantazis and Pemberton's (2009, 2011) claims that Muslim communities have become "suspects."

> It is . . . quite another thing to claim that the United Kingdom's anti-terrorist laws, underpinned by an anti-Muslim official political discourse, have turned Muslims nationwide into a community under systematic and pervasive official suspicion . . . There is no convincing evidence whatever that this is true.

Greer's (2010) argument that Muslim communities are not discriminated against pivots on the claim that counterterrorism legislation does not intend to target communities and the notion of substantiated evidence proving that the Muslim community have become a "suspect" community. "[N]one of the United Kingdom's anti-terrorist laws is expressly directed against Muslims or Islam as such" (Greer 2010, 1175). "Feeling under official suspicion is not the same as being under such suspicion, nor is being under suspicion the same as being under unjustified suspicion" (1183).

While Greer (2010) makes some interesting observations, there does appear to be evidence indicating that counterterrorism policies in general and the new Prevent Strategy 2011 could lead to Muslim communities being viewed as a "suspect" community. Within the three main objectives of Prevent 2011 (HM Government 2011b)[2] mentioned earlier, the aim to challenge extremist ideology that supports terrorism and those who promote violence has been blurred by counterterrorism policies. This could clearly be viewed as an exercise in gathering intelligence. Through part of the Pursue strand of CONTEST, for instance, a local police force (West Midlands Police) in Birmingham, United

[2] First, tackling the ideological causes and challenges of terrorism; second, preventing people from being drawn into terrorist-related activities; and finally, promoting partnerships between institutions working together to tackle the causes of extremism.

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Kingdom, installed a number of secret covert and overt CCTV cameras in predominately Muslim areas paid for by the Terrorism Allied Fund. The initiative became known as Project Champion. This highlights how, in practice, Muslim communities were patently viewed as a "suspect" community. Police was also criticized for breaching human rights legislation (Awan 2012a).

An independent report into the project concluded that there was a lack of "transparency" and "accountability" by the police. As Thornton (2010, 49) notes, "the lack of transparency about the purpose of the project has resulted in significant community anger and loss of trust." It does, therefore, appear that, while counterterrorism policies such as Prevent have an overall goal of community engagement to combat extremism, it may alienate sections of the Muslim community through counterterrorism policing tactics. Such policies have, in effect, constructed a "suspect" community within the dictum of community engagement for counterterrorism purposes.

Objective 3 of the Prevent Strategy 2011 targets institutions by providing information, toolkits, and advice on how they can identify would-be extremists. This has also led to the creation of the "suspect" community, particularly within mosques where many questions remained unanswered concerning how the Prevent policy is viewed. For example, the Prevent Strategy 2011 has created a number of courses and language training programs run within British mosques that aim to work with local community-based organizations and local imams toward tackling extremism, and is therefore focused on reaching out to institutions where there is a risk of extremism. However, counterterrorism policing and policies (such as Prevent) have also led to the infiltration of mosques by undercover police officers. This has the potential to damage police–community relations within Muslim communities and further reinforces the label of a "suspect" community. In Greater Manchester, for instance, the North West Counter-Terrorism Unit (United Kingdom) carried out an investigation that used undercover police officers posing as Muslims who attended prayer meetings and services at a number of mosques in Manchester in the pursuit of tackling homegrown extremism.

The nature of the covert tactics used in this case raised serious ethical questions concerning how the police use counterterrorism policies, including Prevent. Yasmin Dar, a member of the Greater Manchester Police Mosques and Community Forum, registered her concern.

> [I]t's alarming . . . I've not heard of any cases of undercover officers going into churches or synagogues, so why a particular faith? Relations with the police have hit rock bottom. It's created a lot of mistrust with the police. (BBC News 2011c)

The actions of Greater Manchester Police seem to strengthen the case made by critics that the Muslim community is a "suspect" community. In Britain, there are over 900 mosques that range in size and encompass a variety of

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religious entities. Mosques, therefore, act as a place of worship and community focus that provide education and spiritual enlightenment (Muslim Council of Britain 2003). Yet it appears that the above incident may have the counterproductive, long-term effect of undermining trust in both law enforcement agencies and counterterrorism policies, such as the new Prevent Strategy. Although mosques clearly play a role in facilitating the wider discussion of issues within society, they should not be institutions that act as an intelligence tool for government or police operations when combating extremism.

Project Champion and the incident in Greater Manchester show that the Prevent Strategy has the potential of making Muslim communities more suspicious of counterterrorism policies, and enforces the principle that Muslim communities and law enforcement agencies share a lack of trust. For example, Jarvis and Lister (2011) conducted a series of focus groups with Muslim communities that aimed to examine British Muslims views as regards with U.K. counterterrorism policies. They found that Muslim communities and police relations had been damaged[3] by counterterrorism strategies, such as Prevent, leading them to conclude that "the discussion of 'mainstream British values' that runs throughout the new Prevent is both conceptually flawed and potentially dangerous" (Jarvis and Lister 2011).

The problem with the current strategy is the increasing sense that most of the Prevent programs, 40 percent (HM Government 2011b, 29), are being used to solely engage with only Muslim groups and use Muslims to play an active role in the affairs of preventing extremism in their community. This problem manifests itself when trying to draw a distinction between "extremists" who may be actively engaged in voluntary work within the community and law-abiding Muslim citizens who are also making a contribution to wider civic engagement in the local community.

A related problem with the strategy and the creation of a "suspect" community has been the blurring of the strategy's main aims, which risks linking counterterrorism with community cohesion and community development. Many of these community services are offered by local councils tasked with mainstreaming Prevent initiatives. The Prevent Strategy creates problems where the government shoehorns certain counterterrorism projects into a community-based approach that adopts community cohesion and builds community resilience as a means to tackling extremism. The convergence of community cohesion and community development programs with preventing extremism risks blurring the boundaries between counterterrorism and

[3] The following is a direct extract from an Asian female participating in one of the focus groups Jarvis and Lister (2011) conducted: "Look at September 11th, when that happened there was a high number of women who were wearing the headscarf who were being treated with discrimination, headscarves were being pulled off, calling names, being called terrorist, Ninja, whatever, very negative name calling. Why?"

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community cohesion. A more serious concern with Prevent involves the issue of local authorities and councils mapping certain projects for particular communities, since the mapping initiative appears to have targeted many Muslim communities across England and Wales (HM Government 2011b).

Several extracts from the Prevent Strategy (HM Government 2011b, 17-8, 31-2, 43-9) further reveal how the Muslim community could be deemed as the "new suspect" community. First, it notes how the key driver for radicalization remains a problem within the Muslim community: "we believe that radicalisation—in this country—is being driven by an ideology that sets Muslim against non-Muslim" (18). Second, it raises concerns as regards theological ideas concerning Islam. In particular, the strategy notes that "the Government designated Islamic studies as a strategically important and vulnerable subject," and further adds that "[t]he FCO and DCLG also sponsored a series of 'road shows' by Muslim community groups around the country involving lectures, debates and cultural events aimed at promoting a mainstream message of Islam on a number of key issues, including terrorism" (49). While these programs' aims are for better community cohesion, they clearly target a certain faith (Islam) and a particular religious ethnic group (Muslims) as opposed to offering similar projects for a different religious or faith group.

Third, Prevent discusses the problem for police officers whom the government recognizes will undertake the task of promoting Prevent initiatives within Muslim communities. "We understand concerns among some police officers that nothing should be said in the context of *Prevent* which inadvertently undermines community engagement and the work they do to encourage people to report suspicious activity and criminal behaviour" (HM Government 2011b, 32). Fourth, it speculates about the profile of extremists, and in particular describes the issue of social exclusion within Muslim communities, noting that "[i]t has been argued in particular that some second or third generation Muslims in Europe, facing apparent or real discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage, can find in terrorism a 'value system,' community and an apparently just cause" (17). And last, it discusses the growing importance of gathering intelligence within local communities, and adds that "[w]hile Prevent must not be used as a means of systematically gathering intelligence on people or communities, it is essential that accurate and relevant information about the terrorist threat is shared by the police with local Prevent partners" (32).

Recent studies also reveal that counterterrorism policies, such as Prevent, may actually have contributed to a spate of hate crimes committed against Muslims because of the manner where Prevent has been used within Muslim communities and institutions. Githens-Mazer and Lambert's (2010) article on hate crimes found that a number of British mosques had been vandalized with graffiti and set alight because of the conflict within Britain concerning counterterrorism policies and the increasing media association of words such

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as "terrorism" and "Jihad" with Islam and Muslims. The words Jihad and terrorism have often been used in the same anecdote to describe Muslims as a "problem group." However, the association of both terms—in particular through media reporting—is dangerous, and therefore risks causing Islamophobic reactions against Muslim communities (Allen 2010).

Broadly, the definition of the word Jihad has been used to define any form of warfare committed by "fundamentalist" Muslims in the pursuit of ideological and religious goals. Yet the term comes from the Arabic root *Jahadaa*, meaning to "strive and to struggle," or exert "some form of effort." Thus this notion of striving and struggling is used in Islam to define how individuals should live their life: that is, striving and struggling to be the best they can either in their professional career, as a parent, a brother, or sister, and so on. Another problem with the interpretation of the word Jihad is the image that it means a "Holy War." The concept of Jihad can be used in a variety of formats, and as such the Quran (regarded as the divine book in Islam) uses the term in a number of ways.

For example, in some verses, the Quran (see e.g., Quran 29: 8) refers to Jihad as striving and struggling to be "good and respectful" to ones parents, which is used to inform the reader that they should strive and struggle to be good to their parents. Yet, in other verses, it is used in the sense of defending one's self against violence, tyranny, and oppression (see e.g., Quran 2: 190). So the term has many different meanings, and the link among the terms Jihad, terrorism, and Muslims is at best problematic and lacking in clarity. After examining the notion of Prevent and the association with a "suspect" community, the article will now look in more detail at the role of the police in implementing Prevent.

Policing Prevent

The Channel project in the United Kingdom is used by policing agencies that aim to stop people from becoming terrorists and extremists, and is currently operating across twelve police force areas in the United Kingdom. Since its introduction, there have been 200 people referred to by the Channel project who are deemed to be at risk of developing an extremist narrative. Therefore, the Channel project hopes to tackle extremist ideology before it develops into someone committing an act of terrorism (HM Government 2010). Ninety-three percent of those referrals via the program are men, aged between 15-24 years (House of Commons 2009). Indeed, according to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) statistics of Channel interventions, 1,120 referrals were made to police forces (from April 2007 to the end of December 2010). The majority of those referrals were of males aged between 13 and 25. A further 290 referrals were people aged under 16; 55 referrals were people aged under 12 (Association of Chief Police Officers 2011).

According to studies conducted in this area, British Muslims' responses to Prevent policing and intervention programs are based on a perception of suspicion, and one that views the police and British criminal justice system with

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a sense of resentment (Fenwick and Choudhury 2011; Spalek 2010). This might be due to the fact that critics argue that Prevent is also being used by the police for counterterrorism purposes under the scope of community policing that reinforces this view of the "suspect" community (see Lambert 2008). Spalek, El Awa, and McDonald (2011, 19) argue that "[t]here is a danger for community policing to become co-opted into intelligence-led, covert, policing under the auspices of the neighbourhood policing model." This experience has also led to a damaged relationship between British Muslims and law enforcement agencies, such as the police (Ferguson and Hussey 2010). For example, research data from Innes and others (2011) indicate that police relations with Muslim communities as a result of Prevent policing have been mixed. They found that although Muslim responses to Prevent policing remained good, their article also revealed a level of concern and dissatisfaction among younger British Muslim men who felt that counterterrorism policing was being abused by the police (Innes *et al*. 2011, 7).

Research suggests that the police role in Prevent programs has been viewed with skepticism and confusion concerning the overall aims of Prevent policing. Following the U.K. government review into Prevent, they found that many police officers had expressed deep "concerns" as to their role and relationship in relation to the delivery of Prevent. Spalek, El Awa, and McDonald's (2008) research on preventing extremism and police–community engagement involved an in-depth examination of Muslim perceptions of the police and their role in relation to Prevent. The article used a range of qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups with over 62 participants who had been closely involved or affected by the counterterrorism policies, such as Prevent. Their findings revealed that police accountability and transparency concerning their operations had been an issue and a reason for tensions between police and community engagement. They also found that building relationships between the police and communities required a mutual sense of understanding and cultural awareness, and as a result, police officers needed to work with Muslim communities in a partnership approach that could empower Muslim communities to voice their concerns and at the same time build trust.

Prevent Policing and Schools

The police have also had to play a central role in implementing the Prevent Strategy in British schools. According to U.K. government statistics, the youngest person convicted of a terrorist-related offense in the United Kingdom was aged 16 (HM Government 2011b). Since the introduction of Prevent, the ACPO has produced a number of educational programs for both police officers and educational staff in schools that highlight the sensitivities surrounding Prevent programs in schools. Examples include "Watch Over Me," "Prevent, Police and Schools," and "Act Now," which consist of a range of DVDs and

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information packs that are designed to help teachers discuss with children the challenges of extremism (Association of Chief Police Officers 2009).

It nevertheless appears that such initiatives and programs may have undermined the Muslim communities trust in law enforcement agencies and education professionals. For example, in December 2009, a project that involved a local police force in the U.K. area of Birmingham (West Midlands Police) sent local police officers to visit a nursery in a predominately Muslim area where it was thought children may be at risk of extremism. Clearly, such incidents employed by the police within schools will be both problematic and difficult (Casciani 2009).

The problems associated with Prevent in local schools permeate into a wider debate of how the police should try to manage two polarizing opinions: on the one hand, the terrorist threat may come from a certain section of the community, yet on the other hand, the majority of that community do not pose a serious threat. As the Birmingham scenario mentioned above indicates, implementing Prevent in schools is a dangerous step since it could risk labeling young children in a negative light. Although schools are institutions that provide learning, education, and creativity much like mosques and universities (discussed below), they should not act as government institutions that involve teachers in monitoring their students for signs of extremism. Indeed, a survey conducted by Ipsos MORI in 2011 indicated that a number of schools disagreed with the Prevent policy (Phillips, Tse, and Johnson 2011). The role, therefore, of institutions being places that are at risk of extremism has now been broadened to cover colleges and universities.

British Universities and "Extremist" Campuses

The Prevent Strategy 2011 has now made universities more accountable when it comes to combating extremism. British Home Secretary Theresa May suggested that universities had become "complacent" in tackling forms of radicalization and extremism on their campuses.

> I think for too long there's been complacency around universities. I don't think they have been sufficiently willing to recognise what can be happening on their campuses and the radicalisation that can take place. I think there is more that universities can do. (Gardham 2011)

Government rhetoric that institutions should take a more leading role in preventing extremism has now been extended also to further education colleges, university societies, and student groups. In doing so, it risks making universities police their students in a much more difficult arena. The notion that lecturers might possibly act as intelligence sources to gather and disseminate evidence concerning their students risks loss of teacher–student trust. Although lecturers should inspire students and promote learning, teaching, reactivity, and research,

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it appears that the government's focus on university complacency in dealing with extremists' does risk making student (and teacher) experience at universities more tense and difficult. Despite these concerns, Lord Carlile argues that

> [u]niversities, however, have been slow or even reluctant to recognise their full responsibilities. There is unambiguous evidence to indicate that extremist organisations have been active, and successful, in extremist and radicalising activity in British universities. (Carlile of Berriew 2011b, 11)

Universities UK, the main higher education sector in Britain, has examined the ways into preventing extremism and radicalization on university campuses. In its report published in 2011, it concluded that the higher education sector needed to be more vigilant and aware of the challenges posed by extremism (Universities UK 2011). Furthermore, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills identified 40 English universities that are at particular risk of extremism, radicalization, and recruitment on campus (Slack 2011). The government has used this research, which reveals that more than 30 percent of people convicted for a terrorist offense in the United Kingdom have attended a university or a higher education establishment (Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills 2007). This is important since the research has been used as a template for government policy in making universities more accountable and dealing with potential extremists on campuses. However, Allen (2011) argues that these statistics do not take into account the real question and concern about how universities actually tackle extremism. In response to Home Secretary Theresa May, Allen (2011) notes that "[w]hat she seems to have overlooked is that around 40% of all young people go to university in today's UK. Consequently, the number of those convicted and who went to university is less than the national average." Similarly, Simcox, Stuart, and Ahmed (2010) found that only one-third of terrorist offenses committed were by people who had attended university.

This new sharp focus upon universities is problematic in that it makes universities part of the overall Prevent Strategy 2011, and risks leading to state interferences and government-sponsored tactics of getting lecturers to look out for signs of extremism. In a time of austerity when universities are facing huge budget cuts, this in turn could lead to universities shouldering the role of the police in countering extremism, which again presages a loss of student trust in the role of higher education and their lecturers.

The problem for universities in tackling extremism has already been clearly highlighted by a high-profile case that illustrates how universities could now be deemed to be part of the radicalization process. While studying for a postgraduate qualification in counterterrorism, Rizwaan Sabir downloaded an al Qaeda training manual from the Internet. He was arrested under

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the Terrorism Act in May 2008 for downloading extremist material, but was released after seven days without charge (BBC News 2008). The case highlights the dangers of tackling extremism on university campuses as students could now be prosecuted for downloading material from the Internet if a jury deemed it to be a material that could be used for a terrorist purpose. In 2011, Sabir was paid £20,000 in damages by the Nottinghamshire police following his arrest. He successfully won his case for false imprisonment and also Nottinghamshire police's conduct, which was deemed to be in breach of human rights legislation. The case also raised important issues concerning how the police and universities implement counterterrorism policies (such as Prevent), and the profound impact that counterterrorism arrests can have upon a person's family life. In Sabir's words:

> This is finally some vindication and we can say proudly that I have proved to many, many people who may have suspected that I was a terrorist that I am actually innocent and always have been . . . It shows and it proves that [the police] were wrong to have behaved the way they did. They were wrong to put me through the torturous experience they did and they have finally accepted that. (Jones 2011)

Rizwaan Sabir also expressed concerns about how universities in his view have become less accountable on issues pertaining to counterterrorism policies, and argued that universities should do more to build trust with their students. "Because there is no public authority in the whole of the United Kingdom that can hold British universities to account, only a public inquiry can reveal the possible extent of malpractice" (Sabir 2011; see also Jones 2011).

The shift in Prevent policy now means that universities should do more to ensure their students are not following a path of extremism. However, with this policy comes a stark warning that Islamic associations at universities (unlike other faith associations, such as Christianity, Sikh, or Jewish groups) will also have to play a stronger role in combating extremism. Lord Carlile stated: "I have urged and have no doubt about the strategy's conclusions that universities, including all working in them, owe a duty of care to each student a member of staff teaches or tutors, and to the student body in general" (Carlile of Berriew 2011b, 11).

One critic has argued that the Prevent Strategy 2011 will have a counterproductive effect as it will create an atmosphere among young British Muslims of isolation and anger that could lead to more people following a path of extremism (Awan 2011). At the moment, the Prevent Strategy 2011 does not provide any tangible or credible evidence as to how universities can tackle the threat of extremism on campuses; instead, it implies by its counterterrorism narrative that academics will know who is and who is not an extremist. The problem with such a complex issue is demonstrated by Allen (2011), who states

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> in fact, most people are merely a click or two on Google away from an extremist website or message-this is not exclusive to universities. Rather than making simplistic and lazy assumptions about what "can be happening," what do we know "is" actually happening on our campuses?

Allen's point underlines the importance of the role of the Internet and how the new Prevent Strategy 2011 intends to tackle extremism over the web.

Cyber-extremism

Cyber-extremism is the convergence of cyberspace and online forms of cyber hate, cyber-terrorism, and extremism. Evidence suggests that terrorist groups, such as al Qaeda, have the capability of using the powers of the Internet to radicalize and recruit vulnerable people to an ideology of hate and cyber-terrorism (Awan 2012b). One of the core issues as regards the Prevent Strategy 2011 is, therefore, how the Internet may be a tool for extremism. As Lord Carlile of Berriew (2011b, 7) states,

> [t]o protect our society, we must be prepared to use the internet as a tool of good governance: internet radicalisation must face a competing narrative, with the good facing up to the bad on equal terms, using the same or better technology and methods.

British Home Secretary Theresa May expressed concerns that al Qaeda has the capabilities of using the Internet to groom and recruit vulnerable people toward a path of violence and hate. She argued that since the Arab spring in (2010-11) and the death of Osama bin Laden, the cyber-extremist threat from al Qaeda has increased. "Since the death of Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda has explicitly called not only for acts of lone or individual terrorism, but also for cyber-jihad" (May 2011). Terrorist-related material on the Internet, such as websites, images, and sermons, are clearly becoming increasingly important in the discourse on cyber-extremism since both extremist groups at home and those based overseas are able to use the Internet to radicalize vulnerable people.

Indeed, online terrorist material is being used by terrorist groups for live online beheadings that amplify the act of violence and appeal to a more global audience (Weimann 2005). It also provides extremist organizations with a psychological platform where extremist groups can manipulate and propagate their demands (Awan 2010). For example, Pervez Khan aimed to kill and behead a British Muslim soldier, and then use the Internet as a tool for posting the beheading online but was arrested and charged for conspiring to commit murder with intent (Guardian Press Association 2008).

The advent of cyber-extremism has resulted in the British police launching a new Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (Direct Government 2011). The unit's main aim is to assess, investigate, and tackle material considered to be

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illegal and related to terrorism. The problem for the Prevent Strategy 2011 is the difficulty in preventing people from going online and meeting those with extremist views in Internet chat rooms. Preachers, such as Omar Bakri—someone who was barred from entering the United Kingdom—have been able to use chat rooms and online forums to promote an agenda of extremism (BBC News 2006).

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to shed light on a new government policy on extremism, which has caused controversy and anger among many Muslim communities. The article examined and gave an early reading of the Prevent Strategy 2011, and its impact upon British Muslims and the view that they had become the "new suspect" community. The examination of its problems given here suggests that the U.K. government clearly needs to develop a better understanding of how to prevent people from following a path of extremism. This requires a stronger research evidence base that can help improve understanding of the causes of extremism.[4]

As noted throughout this article, the Prevent Strategy 2011 should do more to challenge and understand what makes someone become an extremist, and begin a process of engagement that can help remove the "suspect" community label that has been associated with the Muslim community. According to British Home Secretary Theresa May, the previous Prevent policy was flawed because it failed to identify the threat from extremism; "It failed to confront the extremist ideology at the heart of the threat we face; and in trying to reach those at risk of radicalisation" (Gardham 2011). However, the problem with counterterrorism policies, such as the 2011 Prevent Strategy, concerns its potential to profile activities and people as extremists or terrorists without a robust evidence base, as highlighted by the earlier discussion of Project Champion (see also Awan 2012a).

The suggestion that stems from the arguments in this article is that future counterterrorism policy needs to address the problem of building trust among the state, law enforcement agencies, and the Muslim community. More detailed information from the Muslim community is an important future goal and could help build such trust. Across Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States, government policy on preventing extremism has claimed that al Qaeda is the key threat to national security in the twenty-first century. As a result, the U.K. and the U.S. policies both employ community-based approaches and law enforcement agencies as a means to tackle the threat from al Qaeda and homegrown extremism. The Obama administration has also created a vision

[4] The following BBC Radio 4 program discusses the wider impact of extremism within the United Kingdom (BBC Radio 4 2011).

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of community partnerships and local community work with partners and stakeholders in attempting to build trust. According to White House (2011, 6), "this necessitates on going research and analysis, as well as exchanges with individuals, communities, and government officials who work on the frontlines to counter the threats we all face."

Similarly, the U.K. Prevent Strategy 2011 has targeted institutions where people are at risk of becoming extremists, and the U.S. policy has also focused on mosques becoming a breeding ground for extremism. As such, both the U.K. Prevent Strategy 2011 and U.S. policies on tackling extremism are constantly evolving and creating policies that preempt the risk from extremism. However, the problem is that while policies in both countries are drawing from softer forms of community engagement, they at the same time risk becoming policies that are intrusive.

About the Author

Imran Awan is a senior lecturer at the Centre for Police Sciences at the University of Glamorgan. He has taught on a variety of modules, such as international police duties and law, terrorism, law and policy, and violent extremism and terrorism. He has written numerous articles in the area of counterterrorism, human rights, and police powers, and co-edited the book *Policing Cyber Hate, Cyber Threats and Cyber Terrorism*. He is currently involved in research that examines the impact of counterterrorism legislation upon Muslim families. He is the ambassador for the Make Justice Work Campaign and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

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